

UNITED STATES SENATOR • IOWA

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Grassley Receives Award for Work to Improve Nursing Homes

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, has received an award for “those whose outstanding efforts in public policy have improved the care of nursing home residents.” The award came from the National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform, one of the nation’s most prominent nursing home resident advocacy groups.

“This is an honor,” Grassley said. “The National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform is always fighting to improve the lives of nursing home residents. I’m grateful to work with this group on one of our most important causes as a society.”

On Monday, Grassley received the group’s first-ever National Leadership Award. He was the only senator to receive the award. In giving Grassley the award, the group said:

A long list of accomplishments resulted in your selection for this award. As the organization that led the campaign to pass the Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987, NCCNHR will remain forever grateful for your determination to ensure that the law is enforced. Successive Administrations had failed to implement the enforcement requirements until 1998, when you began a series of hearings to examine the Administration’s enforcement record and to publicize widespread neglect in nursing homes. Similarly, it was through your efforts that the long-overdue government study of nurse staffing ratios was completed and delivered to Congress this year and that legislation was introduced to ensure accurate public reporting of nurse staffing levels. Your ongoing oversight of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in both Democratic and Republican administrations has served as a warning to those who would weaken the regulatory system, and your scrutiny of nursing home spending has tempered industry demands for increased federal funding without accountability for how it is spent.

Grassley’s nursing home work continues. Earlier this month, Grassley and Sen. Max Baucus introduced the *Beneficiary Access to Care and Medicare Equity Act of 2002*, which includes increased funding for nursing homes while requiring more accountability from nursing homes about staffing levels. The accountability measure is from a freestanding bill Grassley and two other senators introduced earlier this year.

Grassley has asked the General Accounting Office to review whether a pilot project to collect

nursing home quality data is successful as is or whether it should be reformed, a key study before the pilot project is to be expanded nationwide this fall. He and another senator also are working to make sure the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services clarifies draft guidelines that could lead to greater use of anti-psychotic medications that act as chemical restraints in nursing homes. Also, each year, Grassley monitors annual appropriations for nursing home inspections and enforcement to ensure adequate funding levels.

“A lot of people working together have made progress in improving nursing home conditions, but not enough,” Grassley said. “Many nursing home residents receive perfectly fine care. But as long as any residents go hungry, or develop painful bed sores, or are beaten by staff, no one who’s in a position to change nursing home conditions can rest.”